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A

True and Exact

RELATION

of the late Prodigious Earth-quake and Eruption of

MOUNT-ÆTNA, *or* MONTE-GIBELLO

As it came in a Letter written to His Majesty from *Naples* by the Right Honourable the Earl of *Winchilsea*, His Majesties late Ambassador at *Constantinople*, who in his Return from thence visiting *Catania* in the Island of *Sicily* was an Eye-witness of that Dreadfull Spectacle.

Together with more particular Narrative of the same as it is Collected out of several Relations sent from *Catania*.

Published by Authority.

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A true and Exact Relation of the late Prodigious Earthquake and Eruption of Mount-Ætna, *or* Monte-Gibello, *as it came in a Letter written to His Majeſty from* Naples *by the Right Honourable the Earl of* Winchelſea, *His Majeſties late Ambaſſador at* Conſtantinople, *who in his Return from thence viſiting* Catania *in the Iſland of* Sicily *was an Ey-witneſs of that Dreadfull Spectacle. Together with a more particular Narrative of the ſame as it is Collected out of ſeveral Relations ſent from* Catania.

May it pleaſe your Majeſty.

IN *my voyage from* Malta *to this place wherein I have uſed all the diligence the Seaſon hath given me leave, I touched at the City of* Catania *in* Sicily, *and was there moſt kindly invited by the Biſhop to lodge in his Palace, which I accepted, that ſo I might be the better able to inform Your Majeſty of that Extraordinary Fire, which comes from* Mount-Gibello 15 *miles diſtant from that City; which for it's horridneſs in the Aſpect, for the vaſt quantity thereof, (for it is 15 miles in length and 7 in breadth) for it's Monſtrous Devaſtation, and quick progreſs, may be termed an Inundation of Fire, a Flood of Fire, Cinders and burning-ſtones, burning with*

that Rock as to advance into the Sea 600 yards and that to a mile in [illegible] I saw. And that which did [illegible] my Admiration most was to see the Sea with mighty [illegible] like ragged Rocks, boyling in fury for [illegible] and [illegible] the Sea is salt, seems a most liquid [illegible] the most fluid [illegible] with great violence, the flame about it, which [illegible] of such liquid, melted Rock, fell into the Sea every Moment in some places or other, causing a great and horrible noise, Smoke and Hissing in the Sea; And thus more and more coming after it, making a firm foundation in the Sea it self. I stayed there from nine a clock on Saturday morning, to Seven next morning, And this Mountain of fire and stones with cinders had advanced into the Sea 20 yards at least in several places; in the middle of this fire, which burned in the Sea, it hath formed a passage like to a River, with it's Banks on each side very steep and Craggy, and in this Channel moves the greatest quantity of this fire, which is the most liquid, with stones of the same composition and cinders all red hot, swimming upon the fire of a great magnitude; from this River of fire doth proceed under the great mass of the stones which are generally three fathom high all over the Country, where it burns and in other places much more, there are secret Conduits or Rivulets of this liquid matter, which communicates fire and heat into all parts more or less, and melts the stones and cinders by fits in those places where it touch eth them, over and over again, where it meets with Rocks or Mosses of the same matter (as many are) they melt and go away with the fire, when they find other compositions, they turn them to Lime or Ashes (as I am informed) The composition of this fire, stones and cinders, are Sulphur, Nitre, Quick-silver, Sol-Armoniac, Lead, Iron, Brass, and all other Metals. It moves not regularly, constantly down hill; in some places it hath made the Valley's, Hill's, and the Hills that are not high are now valley's. When it was night I went upon two Towers in divers places, and could plainly see at ten miles distance, as we judged, the fire to begin to run from the Mountain in a direct line, the flame to ascend as high and as big as one of the highest and greatest Steeples in Your Majesties Kingdom, and to throw up great stones into the Aire; I could see the River of fire descending the mountain of a terrible fiery or red colour, and stones of a paler red, to swim thereon, and to be, some as big as an ordinary Table. We could see this fire to move in several

other

other places, and all the Country covered with fire, aſcending with great flames in many places, ſmoking like to a violent furnace of Iron melted, making a noiſe with the great pieces that fell, eſpecially thoſe which fell into the Sea. A Cavalier of Malta, who lives there, and attended me, told me that the River was as liquid where it Iſſues out of the mountain as water, and comes out like a Torrent with great violence, and is five or ſix fathom deep, and as broad, and that no ſtones do ſink therein. I aſſure Your Majeſty no pen can expreſs how terrible it is, nor can all the Arts and Eloquency of the world queach, or divert that which is burning in the Country. In forty dayes time it hath deſtroyed the habitations of 27 or 28 thouſand Perſons, made two hills of ſtone, 1000 paces high a piece, and one is four miles in compaſs, as your Majeſty will ſee by the draught that Pirro the Geometer is to ſend herewith; It was the beſt I could get, but hath nothing of the progreſs into the Sea, the confuſion was ſo great in the City, which is almoſt ſurrounded with mountains of fire, that I could not get any to draw one, but I have taken care to have one ſent after me for Your Majeſty: of 10000 perſons which inhabited Catania 3000 did onely Remain, all their Goods are carried away, the Cannons of Braſs are removed out of the Caſtle, ſome great Bells taken down, the City Gates walled up next the fire, and preparation made all to abandon the City.

That night which I lay there, it rain'd Aſhes all over the City, and ten miles at Sea it troubled my eyes, that fire in it's progreſs met with a Lake of four miles in compaſs, and it was not onely ſatisfied to fill it up though it was four fathom deep, but hath made of it a mountain.

I ſend alſo to Your Sacred Majeſty a Relation in Print which the Biſhop gave me, wherein the beginning is Related, and ſeveral curious paſſages. I moſt humbly beſeech Your pardon for the hindering Your Majeſty ſo long from Your better Imployments; And I beſeech you Great Sir ever to believe I Love and Reverence Your Perſon above all Expreſſions, for I am,

Naples the 27th of Aprill / 7 of May, 1669.

Your Majeſties moſt obedient, moſt humble and moſt faithfull Subject and Servant.

Winchilſea.

A particular Narrative of the late dreadful Earthquake and Eruption, as it is collected out of several Relations from Catania.

MOunt-Ætna, or *Monte Gibello*, a Mountain so renowned throughout the world for its height and greatness, but much more for those prodigious Flames, Smoak and Ashes, which it hath cast out from the top of it, whilst the other parts are continually (even in the midst of Summer) covered with Snow, has been for many Ages observed once, or sometimes oftner, in the space of about fifteen years, to throw up more then ordinary flames, with much smoak and stones, and great quantity of ashes; which (though terrible to the neighbouring Towns and Villages) was yet wont in little time to abate of its fury, and prove but seldom more injurious to the Country near it, than by communicating largely its Ashes, which though for the present it did somewhat incommodate them, they had afterwards a considerable compensation in the product of their Lands, which by this means were rendred more fruitful.

But on Friday the 18th of *March*, 1669. the Sun was observed before its setting to appear of a pale and dead colour, which (being contrary to what it ever before appeared to us) struck no small terrour into the Inhabitants, all objects appearing also of the

the ſame colour, with a paleneſs received from that of the Sun. The ſame night happened in this City, as well as the whole Country here abouts, a terrible and unuſual Earthquake, whoſe ſtrong and unequal motions, joyned with horrible roaring from *Monte Gibello*, exceedingly frighted the Inhabitants, but was ſo extraordinary violent in the Country adjacent, that the people were forced to abandon their Houſes, and to fly into the Fields to avoid the danger threatned them from the falling of their Houſes. The Village of *Nicoloſi* was of all others the moſt dreadfully handled by this furious Earthquake, the Houſes and other Buildings being ſhaken all in pieces, and buried in their own ruines; the poor people (who had preſerved their lives by a timely flight, with ſuch little of their Goods as their haſty fears would permit them to carry out with them) continued a night or two in the Fields, beholding with grief and aſtoniſhment the ruine of their habitations. But obſerving that by theſe violent concuſſions the earth begun to open in ſeveral places, and to threaten them with inevitable ruine, they fled, though with much trouble and amazement to this City. Theſe ſhakings of the Earth being ſo frequent and violent, that the people went reeling and ſtaggering, with much difficulty ſupporting one another from falling, inſomuch as what with their want of ſleep, the pains they were forced to take in travelling, and the great Terrors imprinted on them by what they have ſeen and ſuffered, they appeared at their arrival in this Citty, as ſo many diſtracted people, wholly inſenſible of what they did.

The dreadful convulſion of the Earth was immediatly followed on Monday *March* 11th about ten at night, by three terrible eruptions much about the ſame time, and at a little diſtance one from the other.

The ſaid Eruptions was obſerved there on the ſide of *Monte Gibello*, about two miles beyond the Mountain, called *Monpileri*, with a terrible noiſe it threw its flames with much fury and violence about a hundred yards in heighe, its noiſe not roaring only inwardly from the belly of the Mountain as before, but violently cracking like peals of Ordnance or Thunder, from the ſide of it throwing out vaſt Stones, ſome of them three hundred

pound

pound weight, which being as it were shot through the Air, fell several miles distant from the place, whilst the whole Air was filled with Smoak, burning Cinders, and Ashes which fell like a fiery Rain upon the Country.

In the mean time there issued from the side of this prodigious Mountain a vast torrent of melting and burning matter, which like an inundation drowned, as in a flood of fire, the Country on this side of it.

This burning River ran down upon the Mountain *Mompileri*, which, opposing its direct course, it divided it self into two streams, which encompassed the said Mountain, one of them taking its way by *La-Guardia*, the Convent of St. *Mary* and *Malpasso*; the other by the Towns of *Mompileri* and *Faliconi*, which in few hours were wholly destroyed and lost, not so much as any sign of them remaining, with several lesser Villages and Farms, and with them the famous Image of the blessed Lady of the *Annunciata*, which though highly reverenced throughout the whole Island, esteemed the wonder of *Sicily* and the whole world, and to which the people with much devotion resorted in pilgrimage from the remotest parts, was also swallowed and consumed by this dreadful Torrent.

This fiery and burning Deluge immediately spread it self to above six miles in breadth, seeming to be somewhat of the colour of melted and burning Glasse, but as it cools, becomes hard and rocky, and every where in its passage leaves Hills and Pyramids of that matter behind it.

At the same time *mount Gibello* from it's top raged with dreadful flames, which with its noise and concussion of the Earth still continuing, added not a little to the terror of the People, who ran with cryes and lamentations about the City and Country, suspecting nothing but to be swallowed or consumed by fire, having no other apprehensions but of death and a general conflagration.

The two torrents of Fire came forward, destroying all things in their way, and by Wednesday, *march* 13th, had one the West-side branched it self into several streams, and over-ran Com- *munda*, St. *Pietro* and *Misserbianco*, with *La Poiella* and St. *Antonio*.

no: And on the East-part ruined the lower part of *Mascalucia* and *Le Placebi*, taking its way towards this City.

On Thursday the 14th the wind came East-wards, on which day fell abundance of Rain, which abated not the progress the Fire, which on the East-side had from *Mascalucia* made its way to St. *Giovanni di Galermo*, the lower part whereof is destroyed, and passing on seemed to threaten this City on the one side, as did that on the West-side the other.

As the Fire approached, the religious every where appeared with much devotion, carrying in procession their Reliques, especially those of St. *Agatha*, the famous martyr of *Catania* in which they reposed no small confidence, followed by great multitudes of people, some of them mortifying themselves with Whips and other signs of penance, with great complaints and cryes, expressing their dreadful expectation of the events of those prodigious fiery inundations.

Whilst the people were thus busied in their devotions, and astonisht by their fears, news was brought to the magistrates of the City, that a considerable number of Thieves and Robbers had taken the opportunity of this general distraction to make a prey of the already distressed people, and that they had murthered several of them for their goods, and that it was to be feared that the City of *Catania* it self might run some danger from the great numbers of them which were about the Country, and from thence took their opportunities to get into the Town; whereupon consultation being had for the prevention of farther mischief from them, the Commander of the Castle was ordered with a considerable number of Horse and party of Spaniards to secure the Country and City against those Robbers, who immediatly sent out several parties with his Provost Marshal, with order to seize on all suspected persons, and such as were not able to give a good account of themselves · and for such as were taken in the fact robbing, to execute them by martial law, without any farther tryal, and accordingly caused three pair of Gallows to be set up up for their speedy execution, one before the Gate, *Di Aci*, a second in the market-place, and a third before the Gate *Della Decima*, setting strong Guards before the Gates of the City, and

 cauſing;

cauſing all ſuſpected houſes to be ſearched, an account to be given in of all Lodgers, and ſuch perſons to be ſecured as could any ways fall under a ſuſpicion.

The poor people out of the Country being by this prodigious calamity ſtript out of all their eſtates, and reduced to great extremity, fled moſt of them for refuge and relief to this City, with great lamentations, moving the charity of the magiſtrates, which was readily inclined to give them the beſt aſſiſtance they were able; and the Citizens moved by their complaints and ſufferings, freely opened their doors, filling their houſes with as many of thoſe diſtreſſed people as they could poſſibly receive, the Biſhop and all perſons of quality and eſtate contributing largely for their ſupport, till better order could be taken for the diſpoſing of them.

The City of *Meſſina* alſo, and ſeveral other Cities informed of this extraordinary calamity, ſent hither large ſupplies of proviſions, offering their beſt aſſiſtance to this place in caſe of extremity.

All the Elements ſeemed at this time to make war againſt us, and to conſpire together for the puniſhment of the Inhabitants, the Air was continually darkned with clouds and ſmoak agitated by great and violent winds, and ofte times ſhowred down great Rains, inſomuch as the Sun from the beginning of theſe eruptions very ſeldom appeared to us, and when it did (with extraordinary paleneſs) for a little time only, and (as it were abhorring ſo dreadful a ſpectacle) ſoon hid its face again under a thick cloud.

The Sea ran much higher than it was wont to do, and by its extraordinary roaring, and in ſome places over-flowing its banks, added not a little to our conſternation; the Land every where inveſted with Thieves, inſomuch, that till by the extraordinary care taken by the magiſtrates and officers ſeveral executions was done upon ſuch as were apprehended in the fact, no perſon was able to go abroad without danger of his life, whilſt the fire by this prodigious over-flowing of the mountain threatned to take poſſeſſion of them all.

On Friday the 15th, the ſtream of fiery matter which deſtroyed the lower part of St. *Giovanni di Gerlerme*, divided it ſelf into two parts, one of its branches taking its way toward *Mi ſterbianco*

th'

the other threatning the City of *Catania*, but this laſt was obſerved to move with more ſlowneſs than before, having in twenty four hours time ſcarcely gained one mile.

On the 30th being monday, the torrents being ſtill ſeen to draw nearer and nearer unto this City, the Senate & *monſeguior Camluchi*, the *Biſhop* of this place, followed by all the Clergy, Secular and Regular, and an infinite number of people went in a ſolemn proceſſion out of this City to *monte di St. Sophia*, carrying out with greateſt devotion their choiſeſt Reliqts, and upon an Altar erected in view of the mountain, expoſed them, where they celebrated maſs, and uſed the exorciſmes accuſtomed upon ſuch extraordinary occations, all which time the mountain ceaſed not as before with exceſſive roaring to throw up its ſmoak and flames with extraordinary violence, and abundance of great ſtones which were carried through the Air, ſome of them falling within their view, though at ten miles diſtance from the eruption, the aſhes which proceeded from thence were ſcattered in great abundance, aſwell on this City as on the Country adiacent, every where in the Fields with Cinders, and the heat of the ſaid Aſhes deſtroyed the graſs, which obliged the people to drive away their Cattle to a further diſtance, which would otherwiſe have periſhed for want of food.

Theſe ſtreams of ruine daily crept nearer and nearer to this City, but by uneven and irregular motions, according as it was more or leſs ſupplied from its foundation. But on Wedneſday the 29th we perceived that that branch of it which ſeemed moſt to threaten this City from *St. Giovanni de Galermo* was wholly extinguiſht, and that which bent its courſe towards *Mpiterbianco* ran but ſlowly, and gave us ſome hopes that its fury was alſo near ſpent; but the other torrent which had before over-thrown *Mpiterbianco* continued its motion with as much violence as ever, being in breadth above a muſquet-ſhot over, but in probability could not eaſily over-flow to the Weſt-wards, which was defended by its rocky ſcituation: Another branch which ran by *Santo Pietro* was obſerved to be much larger than the reſt, and its ſtream more quick and active, but meeting with ſome oppoſition in its way, it made ſome ſtop, only ſending out a Rivulet towards the Eaſt-ward about three or four yards wide of its moiſture and

active matter, which directed its course toward a small village about a furlong distant from its main stream; another branch threatned *Campo Rotundo*, but bent its course Westwards towards the Farm of *Valcorrente*, where its fiery body was scattered into several deep and rocky places, without any considerable damage.

About this time we had hopes that the violence of this eruption had been over, the mountain not throwing out its flames with that violence as before, and its noise and roaring in a great measure ceased.

Those who at neareſt diſtance took a view of the mountain, informed, that the top of it was fallen in; the mountain ſuppoſed to want near a mile of its former height, that the largeſt of the mouths from whence theſe fiery ſtreams were vented, was about a mile in compaſs, but the view of this dreadful inundation carried ſo much terror in it as they were not able to expreſs, from all theſe mouths were vomited Rivers of a thick and fiery ſubſtance of ſtone and mettals melted, whoſe depth was various, according to the ſeveral places it filled in its paſſage, in ſome places four, in others eight, twelve or fifteen yards and upwards, its breadth in ſome places 7 miles, in others much more, its flame like that of Brimſtone, and its motion like that of Quick-ſilver, advancing ordinarily very ſlowly, unleſs where it was provoked by the addition of a freſh torrent or ſome conſiderable deſcent; whereſoever it paſſed it left large heaps of its congealed matter, with which it covered and burnt the earth, melting the walls of Caſtles and Houſes, throwing down and conſuming all before it, nothing being yet found able to reſiſt its force, nor any thing able to quench burning, water being obſerved rather to add to its fury, whereſoever it had paſſed, it had left its dreadful marks behind it, levelling ſome Hills and raiſing others, ſo much changing the Scituations, that not the leaſt trace of any place or Town remains, nothing being to be ſeen but confuſed heaps of ragged Stones, which yielding a noiſome fume, ſtrike terror and aſtoniſhment into all that behold it.

On Friday the 22th the mountain roared with much loudneſs, and threw up from it's mouths a vaſt quantity of matter, which formed two large hills higher and larger than that of *Mompileri*, with a large bank of the ſame matter to the Eaſtward, ſending down a violent ſtream of its liquid matter towards *Malpaſſo*, much enlarging the former Current, and paſſing thence to *Campo Rotundo*, and *Santo Pietro* compleated the Ruins of thoſe Towns, driving furiouſly towards *Moſterbianco*, the other ſtream by *Santo Giovanni de Galermi* being wholy diverted and extinguiſh't?

From this time till the 25th the mountain continued ſilent, but then it burſt out again with more force than ever before, its noiſe much louder, like Peles of Ordnance, and ſo forcible and laſting as for 24 hours it cauſed a ſhaking and trembling in our buildings, the Aire ſo filled with ſmoake and Aſhes as darkned the face of the Skye?

The Birds and Fowle about this time, either through want of food or illneſs of Aire which was corrupted with the noiſome ſmells ariſing from theſe burnings, were obſerved to lye dead in all places?

On the 28th the grand Current was advanced neer the City as far as the old *Capucins* which ſtruck ſo great a terror into the people that moſt of them left the City, only ſome Officers remaining with ſuch perſons as were under their command, who have ſecured and ſent away the magazin, and all the Artillery from the Caſtle.

A later Relation from *Catania* bearing date the 27th of *April*, gives us this farther accompt, viz.

The dreadfull Inundation from *monte-Gibello* having deſtroyed many Caſtles and Towns: with an infinite loſs and utter ruine to the Inhabitants, arrived lately with a renewed force at *Moſterbianco*, which it has wholly ruin'd, from thence paſſing unto *Albanelli* in 4 dayes ſpace deſtroyed all the Gardens and Vineyards, with ſixty three thouſand Vines?

On

On Wednesday *April* the 16th with an Impetuous fiery Torrent it came towards St. *Aniello*, where all the remainder of the Inhabitants of this City were Spectators of it, which resembled a River of melted and burning brass about 30 ells wide, running with swiftness to the Arch of *Marcus Marcellus* a famous piece of Antiquity, and passing under it ruined about 6 ells of it, which was the breadth of the Current in that place, from thence it ran to *Madonna di Monserrato* which is wholly destroyed, then falling down to *Madonna delle Grasie* it entred in at one Gate and passed through another, without any considerable hurt, and running through the Gate *Della Decima* filled all the *Plain De Schiava* where it was above 6 ells deep, then taking its way towards the Bull-wark on the Sea side, under the Castle of this City, it ran by, two ells deep into the Sea, in which (to the great wonder of all that saw it) it has made it's progress a mile in length, and as much in breadth, and is drawing towards the gate of the Channel, which gives us great apprehensions least it may that way invade the City it self; Nor is there less danger on the side *Deltindaro* where there runs a great Torrent of the same active matter, which drawes near, and seems to threaten the Walls, and is in that place about a mile in bredth, having overflowed and destroyed all the Gardens from the gate *Della Decima* as farr as *Madonna della Amellati*.

A List of the most considerable Towns and places Ruined and destroyed by the dreadfull Earthquake and Eruptions?

The Towns of *Padaro* and *tre Castagne*, the greateſt part destroyed by the Earthquake?

The Towns of *Le Guardie*, *Malpasso*, *Campo Rotundo*, *La Petielli*, St. *Pietro*, *Mosterbianco*, *Mompileri*, *La Annunciata*, *Falicchi*, *Placebi*, wholly overflowed consumed and lost in this fiery Inundation, with all the lands belonging to them, no footsteps of them remaining?

The

The Towns of *Mascalucia*, and St. *Giovanni de Galerno*, ruined in part.

The large Gardens and Vineyards of *Albanelli*, over-flown and destroyed.

The famous piece of Antiquity of *Marcus Marcellus* much ruined.

Madonna di Monserrato destroyed, besides many Castles, Farms and other places which have run the same fortune, whose names were for brevity past over.

FINIS.